

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 OPIC-03 TRSE-00 SS-15
NSC-05 SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11
XMB-02 AID-05 FRB-03 OMB-01 /077 W
-----054222 082009Z /66
R 071428Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8103

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 1214

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, EINV, ZA
SUBJ: KAUNDA CONVENES BUSINESSMEN'S "COUNCIL"

1. PRESIDENT KAUNDA INVITED A CROSS SECTION OF THE ZAMBIAN PRIVATE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO A THREE HOUR MEETING AND LUNCHEON ON APRIL 6. INCLUDED WERE MOBIL OIL, AMAX, STANDARD BANK, CHIBOTE INVESTMENTS AND SEVERAL OTHERS BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES. THE GRZ PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED THE PRESIDENT, THE MINISTERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, THE GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF ZAMBIA, THE ECONOMIC ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT AND HIS INFLUENTIAL "PRESS ADVISOR". NONE OF THE PRIVATE PARTICIPANTS WERE AWARE BEFOREHAND OF THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING.

2. ACCORDING TO THE MOBIL OIL REPRESENTATIVE, THE MEETING WAS A FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSION OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ZAMBIA, THE ROLE AND PROBLEMS OF PRIVATE BUSINESS IN ZAMBIA AND GOVERNMENT'S THINKING ABOUT WHERE TO GO FROM HERE. THE GROUP WAS ASKED TO PREPARE A SERIES OF REPORTS ON TOPICS DISCUSSED AND ON SEVERAL WHICH WERE BROUGHT UP BUT NOT DISCUSSED IN DETAIL. THE PRESIDENT WAS DESCRIBED AS HAVING "LISTENED CAREFULLY" TO EVERYTHING
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BEING SAID AND HE SUGGESTED THE GROUP MEET AGAIN IN SEVERAL MONTHS. IT SEEMED TO MOST, THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS IN EFFECT ESTABLISHING AN AD HOC COUNCIL OF BUSINESS ADVISORS.

3. NOTICABLY ABSENT FROM THE MEETING WERE ANY MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY.

THOSE PRESENT ON THE GRZ SIDE ARE KNOWN TO BE IN FAVOR OR GREATER PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN ZAMBIA'S ECONOMY, WHILE THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE SEEMS MORE INTERESTED IN IDEOLOGY THAN PRAGMATISM. IF, AS THE EMBASSY BELIEVES, THERE IS A GROWING CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT ON THE ISSUE OF PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY, THE GOVERNMENT SIDE SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN A STEP FORWARD BY ARRANGING THIS MEETING OF BUSINESS LEADERS WITH THE PRESIDENT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF MADE THE DECISION TO CALL THE MEETING WHICH WOULD INDICATE HIS LEANING TOWARDS A GREATER ROLE FOR PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.
CLINGERMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BUSINESSMEN, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LUSAKA01214
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780152-1215
Format: TEL
From: LUSAKA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780481/aaaacqzs.tel
Line Count: 76
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 489dd4b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3042984
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KAUNDA CONVENES BUSINESSMEN'S \"COUNCIL\"
TAGS: EGEN, EINV, ZA, (KAUNDA, KENNETH DAVID)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/489dd4b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014